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Brian R Naranjo 01/18/2002 06:03:00 PM From DB/Inbox: Brian R Naranjo

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D)

Cable Text:
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TELEGRAM

January 18, 2002

To: . SECSTATE WASHDC - ROUTINE
Action: . INR
From: AMEMBASSY CARACAS (CARACAS 114 - ROUTINE)
TAGS: ASEC, PREL, PGOV, VR
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: THE BIG MARCH
Ref: None

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The opposition march on January 23 is the next political challenge for the Chavez government

March organizers and police fear a clash will occur since a pro-Chavez march intends to pass nearby at the same time. END SUMMARY.

AN IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY OF UNITY

2. (U) The opposition march on January 23--the anniversary of the overthrow of dictator Perez Jimenez in 1958--is the next political challenge for the Chavez government and will be an important test as to whether the anti-Chavez forces can sustain their momentum. Ten political parties, the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers, Fedecamaras, and numerous non-governmental organizations intend to participate. It is the first march in which ALL significant anti-Chavez political parties and organizations unite for a single mass event.

3. (U) The event originated with the Social Christian Party (COPEI) but soon was embraced by virtually all anti-Chavez groups. The initial plans were to have four columns of marches to descend on the presidential palace of Miraflores from four different directions. Insufficient funding scrapped these plans. Now the marchers--organizers aim for 50,000 participants--will use a more conventional route from east to west, passing the National Assembly and terminating at Plaza O'Leary.

CHAVISTAS HAVE THEIR OWN IDEAS

4. (U) Meanwhile, the pro-Chavista are planning their own march to commemorate January 23.

5. (SBU) The Metropolitan Police (PM) worry that these two marches will meet around the National Assembly, and this could touch off violence.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L. MILLS
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[REDACTED]
The police hope that the presence of the
National Guard will serve as a sufficient buffer between
the two marches.

HRINAK.

Additional Addressees:
None

cc:

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY LIMA

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